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US diplomatic iceberg spotted near China

The Saker

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Do you remember president Bill Clinton ordered two US aircraft carrier battle groups into the Strait of Taiwan in 1996 to "send a message" to China? Well, it appears that Barack Obama, the lame-duck, spineless multi-humiliated and multi-defeated president of the US of A, just had a surge of testosterone and decided to provoke China yet again by mocking its decision to extend its air defense zone over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

The way Uncle Sam sent his usual message of imperial contempt was to send two B-52 bombers to flout the Chinese air defense zone. Not content to do something so mind-bogglingly stupid and irresponsible, the Americans also decided to make sure to add an inflammatory statement.

According to the BBC, (emphasis added):

US Colonel Steve Warren at the Pentagon said Washington had "conducted operations in the area of the Senkakus". "We have continued to follow our normal procedures, which include **not** filing flight plans, **not** radioing ahead and **not** registering our frequencies," he said. There had been no response from China, he added.

Brilliant, no?

The geniuses at the Pentagon sent two strategic bombers (capable of nuclear strikes) directly into an airspace which the Chinese have just declared an "air defense identification zone" in which non-compliance with Chinese rules would trigger "emergency defensive measures", and to make

sure to inflict the maximal amount of loss of face on China they have essentially mocked the Chinese for not taking any measure.

I would qualify all these actions as criminally reckless and phenomenally stupid.

First, imagine just for a second that the Chinese had shot down the two US bombers. Then what? Would the US, which did not even have the balls to strike Iran or Syria, attack China? The US sure could not go to the United Nations Security Council for support where they would be laughed out from the council chambers by both Russia and China and, probably most other members too.

So did the Americans count on the Chinese doing the right thing? If that is the case, then the only message sent to Beijing is "Look, we are irresponsible and reckless, and we count on your sanity". This is most unlikely to impress anybody in China.

Second, now that the Chinese did the smart thing and ignored the US stupidity, what has this move achieved beyond alienating China even further?

One really ought to know absolutely nothing about Asia to believe that you can impose a major loss of face on a superpower like China and not have to pay dearly for it. The big difference between the US and China is that the former acts like a spoiled teenager brat with an attention and memory span in the 5-10 minutes range: "The Chinese did not attack our bombers - that must mean that we taught them a good lesson!"

Wrong.

The Chinese will make you pay - dearly - for each such humiliation (and God knows there have been many such humiliations the past couple of decades - remember the Chinese embassy in Belgrade?), but they will make you pay on their own time, when they decide, and that could take literally centuries.

Chinese diplomats and politicians have 4,000 years of experience dealing with uneducated and uncivilized barbarians, and they know how important it is not to act in haste but with slow focused determination. And they will remember that humiliation for as long as it takes to avenge it.

Third, does anybody in the Pentagon, Foggy Bottom or the White House really think that US colonies/allies in the region will be positively impressed? Of course not! Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese diplomats will be horrified to be associated with such a sorry bunch of nuke-wielding cowboys, but they will keep their mouths shut because they all know that their countries are simply vassal states of the USPACOM province of the US Empire.

Lastly, what has the US proven to the rest of the world. That it is powerful? Hardly. Having lost the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, having lost control of Libya, and having been defeated by Russia and Iranian diplomats over Syria and Iran, the US is an obese and obnoxious giant but hardly a powerful one.

Yes, it is reckless to send bombers literally into China's backyard (or doorstep - pick your metaphor), but recklessness is not a quality that impresses anybody in Asia, and the Americans are deeply deluded if they think that they "scared" the Chinese.

The one thing that this latest US provocation has achieved is to prove to the world and, especially, Asia, the US simply does not understand the nature and purpose of diplomacy.

I personally take no position whatsoever on the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands dispute itself. What I am saying is that that type of dispute can only be resolved with careful and time-consuming diplomatic negotiations and measures, and that if Japan truly wanted to get China to give up its claim on these islands the best way to do that would be to make sure that this does not involve any loss of face.

But for a country that has not had an administration capable of diplomacy since the years of George Bush (senior), the kind of provocation we have just witnessed is par for the course.

In conclusion, I would like to say here that US politicians are wrong to be ignorant of Hegel's dialectics and its rules. Gradual quantitative changes (over time) do eventually result in qualitative changes, and this very much applies to the Chinese military, which is currently embarked on a huge program of deep modernization and reform which, when completed, will result in a profound strategic shift in the Asian-Pacific Ocean region.

In contrast to the aging and completely overstretched US armed forces, the Chinese armed forces are catching up and catching up really fast. Yes, in the 1980s the Chinese military did look a lot like the Soviet military of the late 1950s, but the economic boom of China has deeply changed this, and today the Chinese armed forces are gradually acquiring more and more 21st century characteristics; soon, they will easily surpass the capabilities of South Korea and Japan.

Next, and before the folks in the White House fully understand it, the US will be facing a large and technologically equal or even superior Chinese military. China is also being very smart in forging an informal but truly strategic alliance with Russia, which, unlike the US, does every effort possible to show respect and support for its large neighbor.

Should it ever come to a shooting match between the US and China, there is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that Russia will offer its fullest support for China short of actually attacking US targets.

In the meantime, US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said that China's extension of its air defense zone was a "destabilizing attempt to alter the status quo in the region", while the White House said the zone was "unnecessarily inflammatory".

Yeah, right. Have these cowboys ever looked into a mirror?